

## Letter from J. A. D. McCurdy to Alexander Graham Bell, July 28, 1907, with transcript

Copy of a letter written by J. A. D. McCurdy commenting upon the proposition of Dr. Bell to form an organization (later known as the American Experimental Association) to aid in promoting the Art of Aviation. Read Monday Evening, July 29, 1907. July 28, 1907 Dear Dr. Bell:

It is my idea here to outline the proposed Association scheme and to point out the advantages to be gained by the formation of such an Association.

Let us look at matters as they stand at present. You have during the last 15 years brought the problem to a point where the conclusion is not far off, and you are now ready to build a flying machine at least on paper, and have it all complete save in one point, and that point is not a small thing by any means, it is propulsion. In this one point you are deficient, and, realizing this you have sought the aid of Mr. Curtiss. He is a man who stands at the top of the ladder in his profession and not only has the required knowledge of motive power, but has the very important additional knowledge of light constructed having during the last few years sent quite a number of air-ships at his works in Hammondsport. Now it certainly seems to me to be an ideal combination, you on the one hand with the aeroplanes, and Mr. Curtiss on the other hand with the motive power.

The Association plan was discovered in his presence only a few days ago and he went away from here quite satisfied with the vague proposition because being a member of such an association would mean a great deal to him, especially if the flying machine problem was brought to a successful finish. With this idea in view he was willing and indeed anxious to devote his attention and ideas for the advancement of the problem and to let his business go on for a while without his constant personal attention. 2 Now looking at it from his financial point of view he is taking good chances of a great loss, but as he is

## Library of Congress

intensely interested in the getting in the air and because he believes thoroughly that it can and will be done he is willing to take this chance.

Now suppose it was thought that if the Association was formed as outlined in his presence it would be a hinderance and not a help to you in your work. If as you suggested you should simply hire your assistants paying Curtiss say \$5,000.00 a year, do you suppose for a minute that Curtiss would think it advantageous for him to accept. If the scheme was successful would he as an assistant get any credit from the world and would he be any better known. No I think not. He would of course get a share in the profits (supposing there were any) but there he is taking a chance as against a sure thing in the business he now controls and where his name is being brought before the world more every day.

It is my opinion that Mr. Curtiss would not consider at all the proposition in any other light than as an Association.

Now as to the control, you as one of the workmen and as capital will hold 51% of the interest, and will therefore be supreme in all decisions. In this I am going to extreme and supposing that there would be such a difference of opinion as would have to be decided by vote. I think we all recognize your higher knowledge of this subject and would act more in the capacity of a council. After everybody has had his say and put forward his ideas you would of course decide definitely what was to be done, and supposing it was in some construction work, you would decide the general plan and Mr. Curtiss with his before mentioned knowledge of practical construction would boss the job and set each one of us young fellows to work, and so the thing would be done, all under your supervision. As to the disposition of profits — (although it is an item we are not looking for, still it is best to have them provided for supposing there are any.) Supposing we don't assign any at all and leave that all with you so that if when they do come, in your judgment you think any of us deserve any stock reward it may come from you as a voluntary act. I am sure that will be perfectly satisfactory to us younger lads. Curtiss being older might have a different idea and if so you might make some special arrangement with him at the beginning.

## Library of Congress

I don't know whether I have expressed myself clearly, but what I wish to make a point of is that in my opinion the Association is the only scheme that is if we want the cooperation of Curtiss, and I am sure we all do.

Sincerely yours, J. A. D. McCurdy